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RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 3545
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2731
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KATHMANDU 001093

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SUBJECT: NEPAL: PRIME MINISTER RESOLUTE THAT ELECTION BE
HELD IN NOVEMBER

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

Summary

11. (C) On June 1, Prime Minister G.P. Koirala explained to Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Barry Lowenkron and the Ambassador that the Eight-Party Alliance had agreed the day before to hold the Constituent Assembly election in November. All of the parties had signed the agreement, although all but three had included notes of dissent. The Prime Minister was resolute that no party, not even the Maoists, would be allowed to prevent an internationally credible election from going forward. He spoke with disdain of the Maoist Young Communist League as the "Youth Criminal League." Koirala insisted that the election process would be inclusive. He rued the challenges of maintaining unity within such a disparate governing coalition and indicated he would step down as Prime Minister after the election. In response to urging from Assistant Secretary Lowenkron, he said that he hoped to push through

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apolitical commissioners for the National Human Rights
Commission soon.

Agreement on Election in November

12. (C) Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala confirmed to Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Barry Lowenkron and the Ambassador June 1 that the governing Eight-Party Alliance had reached agreement the day before on a new Constituent Assembly election date. The election would be held by the middle of December with the Prime Minister authorized to determine the exact date after consulting with the Election Commission. Assistant Secretary Lowenkron and the Ambassador commended PM Koirala on this achievement. The Prime Minister said that five of the parties had raised objections in the form of notes of dissent but had ultimately signed on the dotted line. Koirala remarked that he had wanted to get these opposing views out on the table so he would know which parties supported him. In the end, his own Nepali Congress (Koirala is President), the Nepali Congress - Democratic and the United Left Front

had been the only parties that had not qualified their agreement.

Prime Minister Resolute

13. (C) The Prime Minister stated that the next step was for the Interim Parliament, which was now operational again, to pass the necessary electoral legislation. Afterwards, the election timetable would be finalized. PM Koirala stressed that he had the final responsibility to make sure that the election took place. He had told the other members of the Alliance the day before that, even if they did not cooperate with him, he was determined to hold the election, and an internationally credible one. The Prime Minister's Foreign Policy Adviser, Dr. Suresh Chalise, added that the PM was prepared to take "stern action," if necessary. "So, no party can hold the process hostage?" Assistant Secretary Lowenkron asked. Koirala replied that that was exactly what he meant.

Maoist "Youth Criminal League"

14. (C) The Assistant Secretary spoke of the hope that many Nepalis had felt in November 2006 when the peace agreements were signed, that the Maoists would enter the democratic mainstream. Six months later, there was great disappointment about ongoing Maoist abuses, particularly by the Youth Communist League (YCL). Koirala agreed, noting, with a voice full of disdain, that the YCL had a new nickname. People were calling it the "Youth Criminal League." He had told the Maoists bluntly that these abuses had to stop.

Importance of Constituent Assembly

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15. (C) PM Koirala emphasized that the Constituent Assembly was crucial. It would decide everything. Constitutionally speaking, he admitted, the current Interim Parliament was not legal. (Note: A majority of the members of the Interim Parliament were formerly Members of the old House of Representatives. They were elected in 1999, and their terms expired in 2004. The other MPs, including all the Maoist MPs, were appointed, not elected. End note.) The Prime Minister complained that there was a lack of understanding of the importance of the Constituent Assembly, even among civil society.

Ready for Inclusive Approach

16. (C) Assistant Secretary Lowenkron pointed out that some Nepalis were concerned they would not be included in the political process. Koirala quickly replied that the Government of Nepal was ready to adopt an inclusive approach. This meant that Madhesi, indigenous (janajati), Dalit and other disadvantaged groups' concerns would be taken into account. The Constituent Assembly itself would help to ensure their inclusion. These groups needed to realize the GON's intentions were positive.

Challenge to Maintain Unity In Diverse Cabinet

17. (C) The Prime Minister described the difficulties of keeping his diverse governing coalition together. He indicated that it took great patience. At times, he conceded, he was disgusted by what members of his cabinet were doing or saying, but he kept quiet for the sake of unity. The United Nations and the rest of the international community kept telling him to maintain the unity of the Eight-Party Alliance, but they did not have to deal with what he faced. Many different ideologies were represented in the cabinet. He wanted to be strong and outspoken, he said, like

Ambassador Moriarty, but was forced to "drink humiliation" instead. Before people had accused him of being a dictator. Now they accused him of being the weakest Prime Minister ever. He endured it all to maintain unity in the coalition so the election could take place.

After Koirala?

18. (C) PM Koirala said everything (and every one) had its useful life. His extended up to the Constituent Assembly election. After that, "I will be useless." Then, he planned to step down as Prime Minister. New faces would appear. He added that he did not want to raise the issue of his successor now because it would disturb the party. That was why he was not talking about the issue publicly. The Nepali Congress would decide who would replace him.

Assistance for Nepal

19. (C) The Prime Minister stated that Nepal was highly obliged for the international community's assistance. Lowenkron remarked that the U.S. Congress had recently set aside USD 5 million for Nepal. The Ambassador reported that there was another USD 3 million that the U.S. had recently found for the Nepal Police, as the Ambassador had told Home Minister Sitaula the day before. Dr. Chalise asked about the possibility of poverty alleviation projects. He and the PM voiced concern about the lack of job opportunities for young people. Young people without work were more inclined to join groups such as the YCL. In response, the Ambassador noted the U.S. Government had a project under consideration to provide security, good governance, and employment in selected pilot districts. Of course, what mattered even more was the business climate. Businesses and investors needed security and political stability. Nepal had tremendous resources, such as hydropower, and bright business people -- if it could take advantage of them.

Attack on Ambassador in Jhapa

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10. (C) The Prime Minister expressed his sorrow about the recent attack on the Ambassador in Jhapa by the YCL. He indicated that he had told the Home Minister afterwards that the police should provide security to Ambassadors when they traveled. Areas should be secured so no such incidents happened again. The Ambassador explained that there had been a police car ahead of him. The problem was that what had started as a demonstration with 30-40 YCL cadre chanting anti-U.S. slogans devolved into throwing stones. PM Koirala assured the Ambassador the incident would not be repeated and claimed that protection for all Ambassadors would be upgraded. The Ambassador stressed that the Maoists had lied when they had said they had no intention of attacking Americans. Assistant Secretary Lowenkron pointed out that the attack had been raised at the highest level of the State Department.

National Human Rights Commission

11. (C) The Assistant Secretary urged the Prime Minister to appoint commissioners to the National Human Rights Commission (which has been without any commissioners for almost a year). Koirala concurred that the NHRC was important but said the problem was his coalition partners. They all wanted to put their own people on the Commission. The PM said he had asked the former Chief Justice Upadaya to head the Commission and to suggest the names of additional nonpartisan candidates. Lowenkron stressed that a politicized human rights commission was worse than no commission at all. Koirala shared that view completely: the Commission needed to be an independent body

and one, Dr. Chalise mentioned, that was inclusive. The Prime Minister promised commissioners would be appointed and approved very soon.

Comment

¶12. (C) Prime Minister Koirala seems determined to move firmly toward a Constituent Assembly election in November. He recognizes it will not be easy, but the May 31 agreement on the new date as well as several other matters, including resumption of the Interim Parliament and review of the boundaries of some of the electoral constituencies in the Terai, appears to have given him a well-deserved boost. As the meeting was ending, Koirala asked the Assistant Secretary if he would stress the need for the parties to work together under the PM's leadership to achieve the goal of an election in November and it was a request the Assistant Secretary was happy to fulfill. We hope the preparations for the election will now be able to accelerate. There is no time to waste.

¶13. (U) Assistant Secretary Lowenkron cleared this message.
MORIARTY